

THE KELLERMONICON

Volume I

by

KELLERMAN

Edited and Published by Leonard Kirke

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All stories and poems were written and first published on

The Jeremy Kellerman Blog! in July 2011

Except *The Bear is Swelling* which was published

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THE KELLERMONICON VOLUME I



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a robotic condom

(for FDL)

Gerald lived with his parents and had very little sexual experience. One day he saw an internet advertisement for a new product from Japan: a robotic condom. In this device Gerald saw the potential for a new era of solo carnal pleasures, a welcome change from the funk he'd found himself in of late. Carefully, he ordered it while his parents went out for cocktails and arranged for it to be delivered to the address of an abandoned gas station.

One week later it arrived. Under cover of darkness and disguised as a box of school supplies, Gerald brought the Japanese robotic condom home and unwrapped it in his room. As soon as he opened the box, he was struck at once with the sadness in the eyes of the robotic condom. Gerald felt as if he could see into the very soul of the creature, and realized suddenly the oneness of all things.

Overwhelmed with regret, compassion, and bittersweet joy, Gerald released the robotic condom into the wild. Deep within his heart, Gerald hoped that the robotic condom would not be corrupted by the folly of men.

Within 48 hours, Gerald forgot that any of this had happened. He remembered it only once, nine years later, as he stared through the window of a deli.

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He would really enjoy hearing about it.

www.kellerman.website

left out of prior releases, while others, such as ***Sarah Davis Experiences a Difficult Bowel Movement***, were left out due to concerns about the sensitive nature of some of the scenes included, and then were restored here for the sake of a more complete record of **KELLERMAN**'s work. Some stories were edited slightly from their original versions to remove potentially offensive material that the author no longer wishes to include.

While other ideas followed that initial rush of inspiration in the summer of 2011, Leonard Kirke felt unable to complete most of them to his satisfaction and unsatisfied with the few that were completed over the next decade. The muse had seemed to have vanished. As a result, much of **KELLERMAN**'s post-2011 completed written work has gone unfinished, unpublished, or published in very limited forms; 2016's ***Poor Little Knife Child*** was published in ***The Seattle Star*** that year, and ***Slicing the Bee*** was published in the Athens, Ohio-based magazine ***Fangle*** in 2017. A 2017 short story, ***Danny Gets His Ass Kicked by a Sunflower***, was finally released in 2022 in the Street Cat Zine Fest edition of this zine. A number of stories were begun in 2016 and 2017 and only completed between 2022 and 2025. These and the aforementioned stories will be published in future issues of this zine.

Thank you for reading, and please accept our apologies.

- Leonard Kirke

May 4th, 2025

*Leonard Kirke is the author of the novella **Roadkill**
and the zine **Copyright Kills Culture***

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forging ahead

**a wealthy businessman neglects his son
and enjoys going hunting for quails**

**he spends time with his son
only once**

he takes his son hunting for quails

**the businessman grows old and dies
the businessman's son grows bitter**

**the businessman reincarnates as a quail
the businessman's son unknowingly shoots his father
as an outlet for stress
and as a way to relive one happy memory**

**the businessman reincarnates as a quail again
this repeats indefinitely**

Mrs. O'Hare

When I was 7

I used to visit Mrs. O'Hare

she was old and lived in a little brown house

down the street

she had poofy white hair

and wore big thick black glasses

when it was hot in the summer

she'd give me big purple popsicles

we talked about what it was like to be a kid

and the differences between then and now

she told me about how her grandma

used to sew her dresses

I told her about which videogames

were my favorites

Notes on **THE KELLERMONICON: VOLUME I:**

The short stories and poetry that comprise **THE KELLERMONICON: VOLUME I** were originally published online on **The Jeremy Kellerman Blog!**

(<https://jeremykellermanblog.blogspot.com/>)

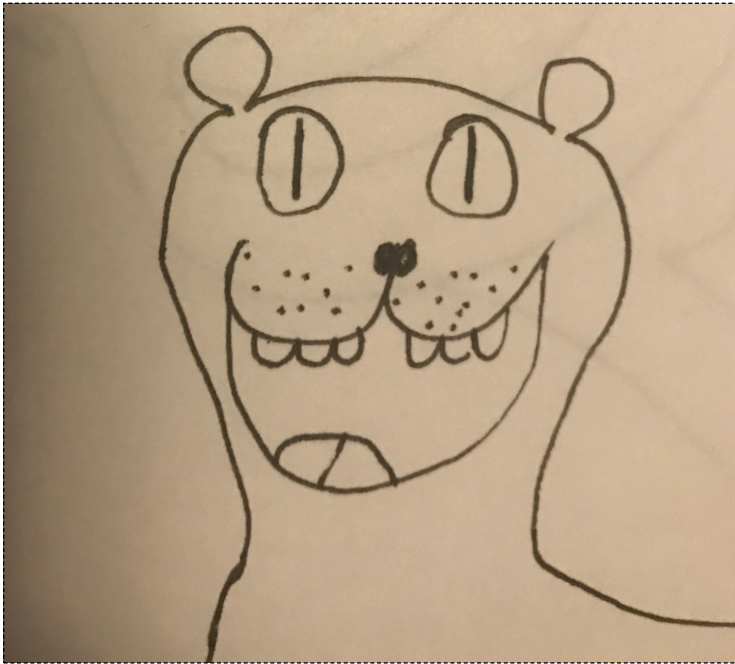
These works were written and first published primarily in July of 2011, with one story, **The Bear is Swelling**, following a month later in August of 2011.

In 2012, they were compiled into a PDF document made available on the Internet Archive (archive.org) titled **The Collected Writings of Jeremy Kellerman Volume One**. Sometime later, this document was removed from the internet and remained unavailable for about a decade. A revised version of that PDF was put back on the Internet Archive in late 2024. Some of these stories were also republished in a prior version of this zine, titled **THE KELLERMONICON: Street Cat Zine Fest Edition** in 2022, 2023, and 2024, available primarily at each year's iterations of the Street Cat Zine Fest in Chillicothe, Ohio.

Some of these stories have also been republished over the years in the digital publication **The Seattle Star** created and edited by Omar Wiley. The short story **Dear Old Mrs. Cranston** was featured in **The Seattle Star** on June 11th of 2014, **The Bear is Swelling** was featured on September 4th of 2014, **Buddha Delivers a Speech** was featured on December 2nd of 2014, **An Advertisement for Hot Sauce** was featured on November 5th of 2015 and again on February 6th of 2023, and **a robotic condom** was featured on January 31st of 2025.

All of these stories were written by **KELLERMAN**, the collective name for the collaborations of Michigan self-help guru and multimedia artist Jeremy Kellerman and Ohio filmmaker and author Leonard Kirke, who edited and compiled this zine. The stories were originally written during a burst of anxiety-fueled mania in the summer of 2011, as Kirke was an Ohio University student pursuing a BA in Creative Writing while forced to take a series of summer courses in Spanish, which he found intensely stressful. While he enjoyed the bulk of these stories, some titles, such as **Merle Prepares for a Night On the Town**, were considered inferior and

The family buried the body that night and no one spoke of it again. No questions were ever asked; authorities never traced the incidents in the city to the home of Susie's family. Susie later became a successful optometrist. She married once but following the news that she was unable to have children, her husband requested a divorce. In the spot where the fetus and the remains of the bear were buried, a small tulip grew and existed for many years (despite the climate not being conducive to such a flower) until the lot was used to build a strip mall.



she told me she used to play hide and seek
I told her I loved that game

she said summer was her favorite season
I said it was mine too

she said her favorite candy was lollipops
I told her mine were chocolate

she asked if I had any girlfriends
and laughed when I got mad and said no

she said she used to have boyfriends
and asked if I wanted to see them

she took me to the basement
and opened up the big boxes

after that I stopped visiting Mrs. O'Hare
except on the really hot days
when no one else had any purple popsicles

Sarah Davis Experiences a Difficult Bowel Movement

Sarah Davis was an attractive girl. Twenty-two years old, she had a constant stream of boyfriends; she was never without one at any given time. Men could not resist her long, luxurious dark brown hair, her toned, powerful arms and legs, her wide, innocent eyes nor her large, perfect white smile. Sarah had worked as a model and as an actress and never had any problem finding work in these fields. Eventually, Sarah had decided to challenge herself and so was working her way through law school. Her sheer physical beauty and regal composure were enough to cause even the most powerful men to bend to her will.

Sarah had her pick of men. One night while on vacation, after an evening out, she and her new boyfriend, Bradley Michaels, retired to their penthouse suite. He had the prestige that was a prerequisite for time with her; he was a young lawyer at the top of his game. His large, muscular arms were the very definition of security to her. She could hardly bare to be apart from him, such was his magnetism. His passion for her was not rare, but her passion for him was a sensation she was not used to feeling. Excitement and lust coursed through her entire body as they lay sprawled out on the bed. She wanted him. They began to undress each other, slowly and sensually.

Suddenly, however, Sarah felt a cramp. She felt a strong urge to defecate.

"Brad, I'm sorry. Wait here for just a sec, okay?"

"Sure," he replied with a smile, "I'm not going anywhere."

Sarah rushed into the bathroom with an urgency befitting neither her usual, regal composure nor her current sexual energy. Sitting down, she was overcome with difficulty as she attempted to cause a bowel movement. Pain began to surge through her stomach as she tried to pressurize her bowels and force out the reluctant, presumably rock-hard waste.

any further experimentation could be achieved, the bear, frightened, returned home.

The night of the 22nd of August the bear did not wear any clothes nor leave the house. During the day Susie had again been upset by the damage to the bear, and her mother chided her for damaging it. Nonetheless, Susie's mother repaired the arm in quick order.

As the night passed the bear considered many things. It briefly stole away to the family book shelf where it attempted to read "The World As Will and Representation" by Arthur

Schopenhauer, but could not do so. Unable to learn anything further, it considered revealing itself to the family, as it felt a sense of trust for them. It spent the day unmoving as it weighed the options.

One the night of August 24th little Susie awoke as she was shaken awake by a foreign hand. She opened her eyes to see not her father, but a figure her father's size and wearing his business suit. The figure was her bear.

Susie became horrified and ran to her parents. At first they did not believe her claims, but soon the bear followed them into their bedroom. Susie's father grabbed a golf club and beat the bear to the ground. The blows hit the soft flesh of the bear's fabric-and-fluff body, confusing Susie's father. On the floor, the bear was motionless. Suddenly, the body began to heave, expanding and shrinking to an extreme degree, and the spine of the bear pierced the suit and the fabric-skin, and the back of the bear's body ripped open.

From out of the body came a flood of fluffy stuffing and red, human blood. Out of this emerged a naked, middle-aged man with a balding head of blond hair and a blond mustache. The man stood, uneasily, and looked at the family, with an uncomprehending expression. He continued to heave, as if he had difficulty breathing. The family looked on, silent and terrified. Susie cried.

Just as suddenly as the man had come into existence, he collapsed onto the floor and shrank into a shriveled fetus.

home, replaced Susie's father's suit, and, shrinking down to his original size, returned to his original position on Susie's bed.

The following night he repeated his actions. This time, he was approached by a woman who revealed herself to be a prostitute. She took the overwhelmed and confused bear to a hotel room with whom she had a previous arrangement and attempted to pleasure him sexually. She unzipped his pants and realized that she did not know how to access his genitals through what she, too, perceived to be a "costume." Frustrated, she tore open the fabric of his crotch. When nothing but fluff was revealed inside, she screamed and fled the building. The bear escaped to his home once more.

The following morning, Susie found the damage to her bear. Crying, she brought it to her mother, who repaired it. Her mother held his arms and caused him to appear as if he was dancing around happily. This made Susie laugh.

Yet again the bear repeated his actions, this time finding a

different prostitute. However, on this occasion, he brought with him a pocketknife he found in the pocket of Susie's father's trousers. As this prostitute began to unbutton his pants, the bear motioned for her to sit back. When she did so, he grabbed the pocketknife and flicked it open with incredible swiftness and proceeded to slice into the woman's leg.

Unable to feel pain, the bear was simply mimicking what he had experienced the night before, as a way of experimenting. To him, it was a simple test of actions and reactions. His expectations were confused when the woman, bleeding profusely and with a limp, ran quickly from the room. The woman who cut him had run away first the last time; why, he wondered, was he not the one to run away first this time? At any rate, he once again returned home.

On the 21st of August, the bear returned to the main street, but several men were waiting to apprehend him. His antics had become the subject of fear and paranoia in the area and he was suspected of being a potential serial killer. The bear was grabbed by one man and a part of his arm was ripped off. The man screamed and retreated when he realized that no human arm was revealed inside the would-be bear costume. Before

Suppressing the urge to scream, Sarah rocked herself back and forth on the toilet, hoping to bring an end to this terrible agony. Minutes passed. Bradley knocked on the door.

"Are you okay, Sarah?" he asked with somewhat feigned concern and an unsuppressed impatience.

"Fine..." she gasped. "Just a...minute."

Nearly a half an hour had gone by. The television, which Sarah had heard being switched on some time ago, suddenly went silent.

"I'm going to go down to the bar and get a drink." Bradley said, and then he left, slamming the door on his way out, before she could attempt any sort of coherent reply. Her mind had lost focus and conscious thought; she had become nothing more than an animal in pain.

Suddenly, just as suddenly as the pain had started, it was over. Sarah heard a loud PLOP in the water. Standing up, she looked down into the bowl. There, floating, was a massive, round, solid turd.

For a moment, Sarah felt as if she might laugh. Something about the absurdity of it all struck her and she wanted to fall back into hysterics, to lose all sense of self and of having any part in the grand scheme of things.

Then, the turd began to crack, and she saw a tiny hand reaching out of it. Slowly there emerged a tiny figure, not more than an inch tall, of a naked adult man. She immediately recognized it as her last boyfriend, Justin. The tiny figure stood on top of the turd and began screaming her name as loudly as he could. Due to his size, the sound was not very loud, but it was shrill.

Then, out of another crack, another small man emerged. This, she saw with horror, was the boyfriend she'd dated before Justin, Doug. He too began screaming her name.

This process repeated as she saw every boyfriend she'd ever dated emerge; meanwhile, the turd that acted as their giant fecal egg slowly crumbled and collapsed into the toilet water.

Soon, the commode was filled with bits of floating waste and countless men shouting her name with thin, shrill voices that made her feel as if she might go deaf. She held her hands over her ears but to no avail; she could not escape the sounds of the voices. Then, furthering her terror and confusion, many of the tiny figures in the center of the bowl joined together, hugging each other as they floated on the filthy water, and as they hugged they began to fuse into a large, gelatinous infant. It appeared partially like a human child, but the eyes were larger and less solid, and the teeth looked like fangs that had melted. The entire creature seemed on the verge of melting, lacking enough cohesion to keep solid.

"SARAH!" it boomed, "WHY SARAH, WHY?! WHY, IN THE NAME OF GOD?!"

Suddenly Sarah remembered something her ninth grade chemistry teacher, Mr. Campbell, had told her: "Flush first, don't you ever ask questions."

Sarah, trembling, pushed the lever and the sickening water began to swirl, taking the hideous, malformed creature and the remaining scores of little men with it down the drain.

Moments later, Sarah, wearing nothing but a filthy robe and her undergarments, collapsed into Bradley's arms in the hotel bar.

"I'm so, so sorry..." she sobbed, "I'm so sorry, please forgive me, please..."

The first question that suddenly assaulted Bradley's mind was why he was more aroused than he had been at any other point in the evening. The second question was why he was suddenly reminded of his grandmother.

Susie's older brother's room, the bear found a different style of clothing to wear, and his size ballooned to match that of the teenager. In Susie's parents room, the bear took on the size and attire of first a full grown woman and then a full grown man. The bear liked the flow of Susie's mother's dresses, and of having breasts, but he preferred the larger, masculine frame he gained from wearing Susie's father's suits.

The bear, in time, learned to enjoy television (with the volume down low enough so as not to wake the family) and to prepare food as he saw the family do during the daytime. Having no mouth, the bear could not eat the food, so he usually wrapped it in tinfoil (mimicking the practice of Susie's mother) and hid it in the back of the refrigerator. The family members would assume these leftovers to be the work of each other and no one ever questioned anyone else about where they had come from. Most of them went untouched and spoiled. A few of them, peanut butter and jelly, were left on Susie's night stand. She ate them for breakfast. They were her favorites. No questions were asked; she assumed them to have been put there by her mother.

By mid-August the bear had thoroughly explored the house and desired more. On August 18th, the bear stole a suit from Susie's father and quietly left the house, undetected. Standing with Susie's father's imposing frame, the bear quickly and quietly traveled down various side streets and alleys before finding the city's downtown area. On a massive main street the bear discovered countless casinos, restaurants and clubs. Curious, he entered one named "Luscious."

Inside the bear was exposed to the gyrations of many strippers, dancing upon poles. One of the strippers proceeded to give him a lap dance. She commented upon what she thought was the "interesting costume" he was "wearing," unaware that it indeed constituted his entire physical body. When the dance was finished and he did not pay, she became irate, criticized him for what she understood to be his sexual fetish for anthropomorphic animal costumes, and requested a bouncer to throw him out. The bouncer was unsettled by how light the bear was, as well as his lack of speech or screams as he was tossed roughly out the door. Several passersby snapped pictures.

Confused, quizzical and vaguely frightened, the bear returned

The Bear is Swelling

For her fifth birthday on the 23rd of June, Susie was given a teddy bear by her mother and father. She named the bear Mr. Hugs. Susie developed a habit of falling asleep with the bear wrapped in her arms. The bear became a source of comfort to the child.

Frequently the bear, "Mr. Hugs," would be left at random throughout the house as the family members went about their daily business. The bear gazed upon their activities with dull, lifeless, thoughtless eyes.

Yet, somehow, as the days passed, something began to change. For reasons unknown, and though it is unclear upon which exact date, the beginnings of sensory impressions formed, eventually leading to the existence of some primitive form of consciousness. The bear, though lacking any ability to interpret what he saw, was able to watch the family, hear them, smell them, and feel them for the first time. From approximately July 1st to July 15th, the bear existed within a state of pure experience and observation, not unlike a human infant trapped within an inanimate form.

Some short time later, the bear began to form memories of what he saw, and after that, gradually, began to learn from and develop opinions about his memories, observations and experiences. Sometime near the end of July, for the first time the bear began to desire experimentation and as a first act of will, the bear moved on his own. First one paw, then the other. Under cover of night, the bear taught himself to walk. This took only a brief period of three days.

As August wore on, the bear began to explore the house on his own every night, just after Susie fell asleep. At first he only explored Susie's room. He tried on her dresses and discovered that, somehow, he would swell in size in order to perfectly fit her garments. After Susie's room lost the sense of novelty it first had for him, the bear began exploring other rooms. In

Piggyback Ride Through Time and Space

I am eight years old. I am at a picnic. It is our family reunion. I am wearing a green sweatshirt.

The other children and I play hide and seek, and hopscotch, and tag. It is great fun.

Uncle Bart comes over to me. He has a big, fluffy moustache and is wearing overalls.

"Hey, sport," he asks me, "how about a piggyback ride?"

"Yeah!" I scream, and he lifts me up upon his shoulders. I take his baseball cap and wear it.

He runs forward as I hold on tight.

Suddenly everything becomes a blur; the ground, sky, and sunlight stretch out into infinity.

Moments later I am forty-five years old. I am in front of my workplace.

It is a multinational advertising firm. It is a skyscraper in New York City.

I am wearing my usual suit and tie. I am sitting on the sidewalk.

Underneath me is Uncle Bart's shattered skeleton.

Buddha Delivers a Speech

Buddha is nervous. He is about to give a speech. Buddha hates giving speeches.

He was up all night writing it. The speech was his attempt to tell of his experiences reaching enlightenment under the tree of figs. Buddha hoped that by sharing his experiences through public speaking, he might help others to improve their lives.

Shortly before the speech was to begin, Buddha vomited in a public bathroom. Buddha hoped that this would ensure he would not vomit during the speech.

Buddha put on a clean suit and tie. He looked like a dapper gentleman.

His speech began and Buddha proved himself an eloquent writer, though a somewhat inelegant, inconstant speaker. Nonetheless, the audience listened patiently and were polite, and Buddha managed to finish his speech without any major anxiety attack or particularly embarrassing flub. When the speech had concluded, Buddha told the audience that he would now take questions.

A tall man in the front row wearing thick, black glasses raised his hand.

"Yes, you in the front," said Buddha, pointing to the man, "what would you like to know?"

"You never mentioned the part where you were crucified."

Buddha stood in a daze of confusion for a moment.

"I never was crucified."

The crowd gasped. A woman sitting in the middle, near the aisle, stood up.

flies into the office and grabs Auntie in his massive talons.

"I'm very sorry, Bobby," says the Eagle, "I am really, truly sorry."

With that, the Eagle flew Auntie away, far away, to some new kind of Hell, which, although certainly Hell, is exactly the one she would have chosen for herself if she had the chance.

As the Eagle disappeared into the horizon, Bobby suddenly transformed into a large, imposing man and took control of Auntie's duties and assets.

The papers, he knew, loved a good hostile takeover, and prepared for the onslaught of embarrassing, probing questions. As he ensured that his affairs were in order, he also installed his company's new product, which caused his mother's corpse to dance, much to his amusement. Contemplative, Bobby hoped in his heart that he would die before the Eagle returned for him.



behind her. Auntie, sitting in her big leather chair and staring out through the huge windows at the fiery sunset, turns to Bobby.

"Bobby, Bobby, Bobby..." says Auntie, "what are we going to do with you?"

Bobby begins to roll around on the floor and laugh.

"BOBBY! PAY ATTENTION!" Bobby's Auntie is a tall, heavy, imposing woman with stern features and a perpetual frown.

Her loud voice makes Bobby cry.

"NO CRYING, BOBBY! This is a BUSINESS! Our goals here are greater teamwork, more effective products, and communication but these all serve one end, the one thing that keeps this whole company together: profit. Your department is bleeding money, Bobby. You show no sign of concern nor any

willingness to improve. You've been given your last chance. Do you understand me?!" Auntie is furious.

Bobby simply continues to cry. Now Auntie is absolutely livid.

"VERY WELL, BOBBY. YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TERMINATE YOU."

Auntie reaches inside her desk drawer for something, but before she can produce it, Bobby's Mommy rushes in.

"DON'T DO IT, MATILDA! PLEASE, DON'T DO IT!"

Bobby's Auntie produces a revolver and shoots Bobby's Mommy in the face. Bobby is crying so hard that he is about to pass out.

"Now, Bobby," says the huge, sweaty woman in an ill-fitting business suit, "look what you made me do!" She presses a button on the desk.

"Security? I need you to remove a corpse from my office, and also please escort Mr. - "

Just then, the huge windows shatter as a gigantic Bald Eagle

"What about Pontius Pilate? Did you ever forgive him?"

"For give him for what? I wasn't crucified. I never knew Pontius Pilate. You've got me confused. You're thinking of Jesus Christ."

The crowd began talking amongst themselves. The frustration was palpable. Buddha felt like a fool.

The crowd began to boo. The man who spoke first shouted loudly "Get off the stage!"

Just when it appeared the that the audience may become violent, everyone present suddenly transformed into balloons of every color and floated so far up into the sky that Buddha could no longer see them.

Buddha reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a cellular phone. He dialed his manager's number. There was an answer.

"Hello?"

"Dang it, Chuck, it happened again!"



Merle Prepares for a Night on the Town

Merle is asleep on the soiled mattress. It is positioned on the floor in the living room in the spot where the sofa used to be prior to being repossessed. The television plays static, punctuated by occasional snippets of random speech.

Merle awakes in the late afternoon. After relieving himself, he changes his sweat-stained tank top and showers and then shaves, carefully trimming the corners of his mustache. He brushes his teeth and applies antiperspirant to his oily armpits.

Merle then buttons up his red, silk shirt, pulls on his very tight jeans and puts his gold chain necklace on. During one brief return to the bathroom, Merle applies a generous amount of styling gel to the remnant of his hair.

Strutting proudly, Merle, filled with excitement, makes his way to the new disco, eager to scope out the beautiful women certain to attend the establishment's opening night.

When he arrives, however, Merle discovers that forty years have passed and that the disco has long since shut down.

Falling to his knees in rage and despair, Merle prays for Zeus to curse his father, Kronos. Zeus obliges, setting free Prometheus at last and forcing Kronos to take on the Titan's original punishment of being chained to a rock whilst an eagle eats his liver.

Merle, seeing an opportunity, asks to have his genitals enlarged as a form of restitution. Zeus, however, has grown old and lost much of his power and mental focus, and mistakenly transforms Merle's genitals into the head of a golden retriever.

Merle is struck by painful irony when he finds that the dog barks when it sees beautiful women and that women always find it both charming and arousing, yet due to the nature of the thing he can no longer have sexual experiences.

Family Incorporated

Bobby is in his crib sucking on a teething ring. In front of the crib, the bars of which have been removed, is Bobby's desk. On his desk there is an In Box and an Out Box. The In Box is stacked high and the Out Box is empty. Through the big windows, the light of the setting sun makes the room appear red and orange and fiery. Bobby's Mommy knocks on the door.

"Honey, Auntie wants to see you."

Bobby, not yet old enough to speak, gurgles incoherently. He is barely aware of what Mommy means.

Bobby's Mommy picks him up and carries him down the big white corridor. It goes on for what seems to Bobby like miles and miles. As they go, they pass huge rooms filled with nurseries where newborn babies are set up in their brand new cubicles. The room is filled with their cries. A doctor man wearing a surgical mask attempts to scream over their voices.

"Bobby, Auntie isn't happy with you." says Bobby's Mommy. "It reflects badly on Mommy, you know. Auntie says your quarterly reports are bad. She says the report you did for the Mendelssohn account was terrible. She couldn't even read it. It made Auntie cry and then she screamed at me. She screamed at me about you."

Bobby yawned. Bobby's Mommy was taken aback.

"Bobby! Don't you ignore me! This is serious! If you can't pull your own weight around here, we're going to have to let you go! Mommy doesn't want to lose her little Bobby-wobby."

Finally, they arrive at the massive oak door. Bobby's Mommy knocks, and a loud voice insides beckons them in. Without a word, Bobby's Mommy places Bobby on the floor in front of Auntie's desk and shuffles out of the room, closing the door

"Stacy Whitehammer, will you marry me?"

"Yes!" They embraced, and Kevin's tongue got so far into Stacy's mouth that her uvula tickled.

"But if you're here, where's Mrs. Cranston? I need to return this!" Stacy held up Mr. Cranston's penis.

"Stacy," said Kevin, "there is no Mrs. Cranston. There never was. It was me the whole time."

"All these years?"

"Yep!" Kevin smiled proudly.

"Oh, Kevin!" Once again they embraced, and then Stacy looked again at the penis.

"Let's plant it! To mark the date of our engagement!" she exclaimed with excitement.

"Yes, let's!" Kevin replied eagerly.

And so Stacy and Kevin went to the park and planted the penis, and it grew into a wonderful tree.

Many years later, a young boy of only three years of age sat beneath that very tree. A pigeon landed next to him, and with inhuman speed, the youngster grasped the bird in his fists and strangled it to death.

"Mommy, mommy, look at me! I'm a big boy!"

Though the lad was only a toddler, his voice was that of a full-grown man.

Happy Birthday

It is your birthday. You visit the home of your best pal, only to find it filled with your friends and family; it is a surprise party!

Oh, you realize, there are so many presents, of all shapes and sizes! You can hardly wait to see what each one is.

After sharing a few obligatory laughs with the guests, it is time to begin opening your gifts.

First the big one, then the little one, then the medium-sized one. You are so overwhelmed with delight that it doesn't occur to you right away just what is happening.

You open one box to find a personalized copy of the Holy Book. You turn to thank the one who gave it to you, and, suddenly struck with embarrassment and terror, you realize that you no longer remember his name.

You say thank you without mentioning any name at all. You look to the woman who gave you the last present; you've forgotten her name too!

"What's the matter?" asks an old woman, "Don't you like your presents? Don't you want to open more?"

Yes, you say, you love them, and you will open more. You can't get away. All eyes are on you. You must keep going. But with every gift you unwrap, every present you open, you forget the name of the person who gave it to you. You forget ever having known them.

You go on, and the tension escalates. Finally, it is over. All of the presents have been opened. There they are, all laid out on the table. A book, a comb, an old tape recording, a photo album, a record, and so much more. You are standing in a room full of strangers.

You smile and bluff and continue to go along with the proceedings. You eat cake. The sweetness is sickening.

Finally, it is time to go. They help you load the gifts into the back seat of your car.

You begin driving, but something else is wrong. You panic.

You've forgotten who you are. You've forgotten where you live.

You don't know where to go.

"Ah. Let me tell you a story, Stacy. Back when the war was on, Carl was overseas. He'd write to me every week and I'd write back, and in every letter I'd drop little hints that I was ready, but he never seemed to get it. So finally, when he came back between tours of duty, I proposed to HIM."

"What?!"

"That's right! I got down on my knees and asked me to marry him. In those days, that was done even less than it is now, and folks could get awful mad about it. I didn't care, though, Stacy, and you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because I was in love. And I knew Carl loved me too. True, I didn't know if he was afraid of proposing, afraid of the commitment or how I might answer him. Heck, for all I knew, maybe he just plain didn't want to get married at all."

"So weren't you scared?"

"Sure I was! But I didn't let that stop me! When you love someone, you have to take that risk and put your heart on the line, even if you might get hurt. It's worth it, trust me, it is worth it."

"So is that how you and Mr. Cranston got married?"

"It was. I even gave him a ring, rather than the other way 'round! Of course, we were poor in those days, so all I could afford was one I'd made myself out of aluminum foil and a shiny pebble. But it was just as good. And since he didn't have a ring for me, he gave me this instead."

Mrs. Cranston smiled and held the penis up to Stacy's face. Stacy smiled.

"Wow. Thanks, Mrs. C. I think I know what I have to do now."

"You don't have to do anything." said Mrs. Cranston, with a much deeper voice than usual.

"What?! But you just told me to - oh!"

Suddenly, Mrs. Cranston's jaw unhinged and the top and bottom halves of her head split apart, and from her mouth emerged Stacy's fiancé, Kevin! Soon, Mrs. Cranston's whole body crumpled up like rubber on the ground and Kevin was sitting next to his bride-to-be. He got down on all fours and looked into Stacy's eyes.

Dear Old Mrs. Cranston

Stacy, an attractive, friendly young woman in her early 20s, was heading down to the local green grocer when she spied her elderly neighbor, Mrs. Cranston, a few feet ahead of her. Just at that moment, an object fell out of Mrs. Cranston's pocket and onto the sidewalk. Stacy quickly ran to the object, picked it up, and then returned it to Mrs. Cranston with a friendly hello.

"Why, thank you, Stacy! You're such a polite young lady! Not enough of them around these days, I dare say."

"Oh, Mrs. Cranston, you're sweet. I'm sure there are many people just as conscientious out there who would gladly return a lost item to a friend, or even a stranger. Speaking of which, what was that thing you dropped?"

"That," said Mrs. Cranston, with a small tear in her eye, "is my late husband Carl's penis. I carry it with me wherever I go to remember the good times we shared."

"I'm so sorry to have brought it up!" Stacy replied.

"It's all right, dear. Carl and I had sixty-two wonderful years together. All good things must come to an end. Still, sometimes it is hard, with him not around."

"I understand. Mrs. Cranston, can I ask you a question about marriage?"

"Why certainly, honey. Here, sit down with me on this old bench and you ask whatever you want to ask."

The two of them sat down.

"Well, you see, Mrs. Cranston, it's..."

"Yes?"

"It's Kevin. We've been going steady for the past five years and I'm ready to take things to the next level, but he doesn't show any sign of wanting to propose. I can't tell if he's just nervous and scared or if he doesn't take things as seriously as I do."

An Advertisement for Hot Sauce

An elderly, handsome Spanish gentlemen sits at a bus stop on a barren road. Surrounding him are dry, barren fields. The sky is an endless expanse of pure blue, not a cloud can be seen. The man stares off onto the opposite horizon, peacefully lost in thought. Sitting on the bench next to him is a stylish leather briefcase.

He is brought out of his gentle reverie by the sound of the bus approaching. He looks to his left and sees the shadowy outline of the bus. However, as it steadily comes closer, his placid, careless smile turns to an angry and bitter frown. The bus is in fact a giant, red hot pepper which acts like a bus, with wheels on the bottom and windows on the sides.

The pepper pulls up next to the man and stops. The door opens and over a dozen anthropomorphic peppers flood out of it. They surround the bench which the man is sitting on. They begin to shout joyfully.

"MUY BIEN! MUY BIEN! NEW VOLCANO SAUCE IS MUY CALIENTE! ARRIBA! ARRIBA!"

The leader of the group, a large red pepper man wearing a sombrero and sporting a stereotypical Mexican-style mustache, shakes maracas in the elderly man's face. The pepper, in a deep baritone and with a stereotypical Mexican accent, leads a song.

"VOLCANO SAUCE, VOLCANO SAUCE

IS MUY CALIENTE,

VOLCANO SAUCE, VOLCANO SAUCE

IS MUY EXCELENTE!

EAT TOO MUCH VOLCANO SAUCE

AND YOU'LL SPOUT LAVA FROM YOUR EARS!

IF YOU DON'T EAT ENOUGH VOLCANO SAUCE

YOU'LL REGRET IT FOR YEARS AND YEARS!"

Just as the chorus begins again, the elderly man, who has been suppressing an onslaught of rage, cries out:

"STOP IT! STOP IT! NOT AGAIN! I AM TIRED OF YOU ADVERTISEMENTS! LAST WEEK IT WAS LAUNDRY DETERGENT! THE WEEK BEFORE THAT IT WAS HAIR GEL! THE WEEK BEFORE THAT IT WAS CONDOMS! AND NOW HOT SAUCE! I HATE YOU, YOU DAMNABLE VEGETABLES, I HATE YOU MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!"

The pepper people ignore the man's outburst and continue to sing. The leader of the peppers shakes the maracas in the man's face in an even more obnoxious way. The man cries out again:

"I WARNED THE LITTLE SOAP PEOPLE! ONE MORE TIME, AND I WOULD KILL YOU ALL! I MEANT IT! I WILL KILL EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!"

The elderly man then opens the stylish leather briefcase on the bench next to him and produces a small ax. Pushing a button on the base of the wand, both the wand itself and the blades extend, making it into an even more menacing weapon. Without further delay, the man stands up and slices the leader of the pepper people in half. He then reaches into the corpse and gobbles up some innards.

"YES, VERY HOT INDEED, YOU HORRIBLE CRETINS! BUT YOU'RE THE ONES WHO WILL REGRET IT FOR YEARS AND YEARS!"

The pepper people scream and begin running away, but their unnaturally bipedal bodies causes them to be slow, and the

man would not cease from slaughtering them until every last one of the singing party was lying in oozing, sauced-covered pieces on the ground. Then, the man enters the bus and finds several horrified females feeding the baby peppers with milky hot sauce from their bulging teats. The man, in a threatening voice, commands them to stay still, and amidst the screams of the women and cries of the infants, he commandeers the pepper bus.

He drives for a little over an hour before causing it to careen into a deep canyon. There were no survivors.

Meanwhile, on a space station, several human brains connected into a massive computer network share thoughts with each other at an incomprehensible speed. They consider matters of demographics, synergy, product placement, and the high costs of mass-scale genetic engineering, and ultimately decide that they need to retool, organize a new focus group, and hire a different consulting firm.

